



Revanth Reddy Pushes for Fast-Track Approval of Mega Road Projects in High-Level Meeting with Gadkari

“Eye secrets bueareau”New Delhi, July 14: Telangana Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy on Monday made a strong pitch for the speedy execution of several marquee infrastructure projects during a high-level meeting with Union Minister for Road Transport and Highways Nitin Gadkari in New Delhi. Positioning road connectivity as a key driver of Telangana's economic growth, Revanth urged the Centre to grant immediate approvals for projects that would significantly improve regional connectivity, reduce travel time, and strengthen industrial and logistics networks across the state. “The Chief Minister's primary focus was the long-pending Regional Ring Road (RRR), which he described as a transformational project for Telangana. Revanth informed the Union Minister that nearly 95 percent of land acquisition for the northern stretch of the RRR has already been completed, removing one of the biggest hurdles to construction. He appealed for immediate Union Cabinet approval so that work could commence without delay. He also urged the Centre to clear the southern stretch simultaneously, arguing that executing both sections together would accelerate completion, optimize project costs, and unlock greater economic benefits for the Hyderabad metropolitan region.”

Revanth also strongly advocated for the proposed Hyderabad–Amaravati Greenfield Highway, stating that the project is envisaged under the Andhra Pradesh Reorganisation Act and deserves priority approval. He further proposed a 12-lane access-controlled corridor connecting the proposed Bharat Future City to Amaravati and extending to Machilipatnam Port. According to the Chief Minister, the corridor would reduce the Hyderabad–Vijayawada travel distance by nearly 100 kilometres, significantly boosting cargo movement, industrial logistics, and trade between Telangana and Andhra Pradesh. “Highlighting tourism and regional development, Revanth sought the Centre's support in securing forest clearances for the Mannanur–Srisailem Elevated Corridor, saying the project would improve connectivity to the Nallamala forest region, the Srisailem temple, and surrounding tourist destinations while ensuring better travel safety.”

“The Chief Minister also proposed a new six-lane National Highway between Hyderabad and Mancheral as an alternative to the existing Rajiv Rahadari. He assured Gadkari that the Telangana government would undertake the required land acquisition, emphasizing that the highway would spur industrial investment, improve agricultural transport, and generate new economic opportunities across northern Telangana.”

“The meeting underscored Revanth Reddy's continued focus on infrastructure-led development, with the Chief Minister urging the Centre to expedite approvals so that these strategic projects can be translated into on-ground progress at the earliest. Nalgonda MP Raghuvver Reddy and senior officials were also present during the discussions.

Telangana Government Accelerates Vision for International-Standard Airports in Warangal & Adilabad

“Eyesecret bueareau”New Delhi | July 14 “In a major push to strengthen Telangana's aviation infrastructure, Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy urged Union Civil Aviation Minister Kinjarapu Ram Mohan Naidu to develop the proposed Warangal (Mamnoon) and Adilabad airports to international standards.”

“The Chief Minister requested the Centre to begin construction of the Warangal Airport immediately, with a target to make it operational by June 2, 2028. He also proposed world-class facilities such as MRO, air cargo, aircraft hangars, and Flight Training Organisations (FTOs) at both airports.”

“For Adilabad, CM Revanth Reddy sought the development of a civil airport alongside the existing defence airstrip, assuring that the Telangana Government would provide the required land.”

“He further proposed introducing seaplane services between Hussain Sagar and Prakasam Barrage to boost tourism and



connectivity.”

“Union Minister Ram Mohan Naidu appreciated the Telangana Government for its speedy land acquisition and assured full support. He also said the Warangal Airport would reflect the rich Kakatiya heritage, making it a landmark aviation project for the state.

Veteran Kapu Leader Mudragada Padmanabham Passes Away

KAKINADA: Kapu Nadu agitation leader Mudragada Padmanabham, former minister, former Lok Sabha Member, and former MLA, passed away at a private hospital in Hyderabad on Tuesday around 6:15 p.m.

The 73-year-old leader is survived by his wife Padmavathi, two sons – Veera Raghava Rao (Bal) and Giribabu, and a daughter Kranthi.

Born on January 22, 1953, old Mudragada had been ill for the past one year, undergoing treatment for respiratory and kidney-related ailments. His father Veera Raghava Rao had been an independent MLA.

Mudragada Padmanabham started his political career in 1977 by winning from Prathipadu. Later, he won from the constituency in 1983, 1985, and 1989 from Telugu Desam. He had been a minister in both the earlier Congress and the later Telugu Desam governments. However, he quit both these governments opposing their respective leaderships.

The leader had scheduled castes and backward classes as his support base. He entered Kapu Nadu agitation in the 1990s to achieve reservations for Kapus. The agitation succeeded when the then Congress government agreed to his demands in 1993–94. However, he was defeated in 1994 assembly elections. Later, he won the Kakinada Lok Sabha constituency as the Telugu Desam candidate. Subsequently, he couldn't either enter the assembly or the parliament.

Mudragada Padmanabham worked as a member of several parties like Janata Party, Telugu Desam, Congress, BJP and YSRC. One of his last endeavours had been the Kapu Ikyu Garjana meeting in 2016, when the agitators burnt Ratnachal Express and two police stations at Tuni. On the next day, he started his fast-unto-death agitation for Kapu reservation.

Mudragada Padmanabham joined in YSRC before the elections in 2024. Though he did not contest the elections, he publicly threw a challenge that he would change his name as Mudragada Padmanabha Reddy in case he did not ensure the defeat of Jana



Sena chief K. Pawan Kalyan from Pithapuram constituency.

Pawan Kalyan won and Mudragada changed his name to Mudragada Padmanabha Reddy through a gazette notification.

Several leaders and personalities expressed their condolences over the death of Kapu leader Mudragada Padmanabham.

Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu said that the news of Mudragada Padmanabham's passing is saddening. He extended his deepest condolences to the Kapu leader's family members.

Telangana Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy expressed grief over the demise, saying Mudragada had always been in the forefront in fighting for resolution of issues not only as a member of the Legislative Assembly and Lok Sabha but also as a people's leader.

AP Governor S. Abdul Nazeer expressed his profound grief recalling that Mudragada Padmanabham had served as an MLA for four terms and one term as an MP. Jana Sena chief and Deputy Chief Minister K. Pawan Kalyan expressed his condolences over the death of Mudragada. He extended his deepest condolences to Mudragada's wife, sons, daughter and other family members and supporters. Human Resources minister Nara Lokesh paid rich tributes to Mudragada. Tourism minister Kandula Durgesh expressed shock at the demise of Mudragada.

Vaishnaw unveils major railway freight reforms to cut costs, boost logistics

New Delhi, July 14

Railway Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw on Tuesday announced a series of structural reforms aimed at strengthening the freight ecosystem, reducing logistics costs, improving supply chain efficiency, encouraging private sector participation and promoting cleaner modes of transportation. Addressing the media, Vaishnaw said Indian Railways was undertaking comprehensive reforms to build a future-ready railway system capable of meeting the country's growing freight and infrastructure needs.

A key focus area of the reforms is the transportation of fly ash, which has significant environmental and economic potential. India generates around 340 million tonnes of fly ash annually, of which nearly 96 million tonnes is utilised by the cement industry. The minister said conventional open-wagon transportation of fly ash often led to dust pollution during loading, transit and unloading.



To address this challenge, the Railways has introduced a containerised fly ash transportation system. Under the new system, fly ash will be loaded directly from thermal power plants through top-loading arrangements and unloaded through side-discharge mechanisms without generating dust. The closed-container model will ensure pollution-free transportation, enable safer storage at cement plants and improve end-to-end logistics efficiency through the use of reach stackers. To expand container traffic beyond traditional bulk commodities, the Railways has simplified the Container Train Operator (CTO) licensing framework by replacing four existing licence categories with a single pan-India licence. The new system allows operators to run container trains across the entire railway network with a uniform non-refundable registration fee of Rs 25 crore. The minister said the licence would remain valid for 20 years, with provisions for extension. The reform is expected to improve ease of doing business, encourage private investment, increase containerisation and attract more non-bulk freight to rail transport.

ACB searches HMDA Chief Engineer's residence in DA case



Hyderabad: The Anti-Corruption Bureau (ACB) officials on Tuesday conducted simultaneous searches at the residence and other premises linked to HMDA Chief Engineer Bachu Ravinder in connection with a disproportionate assets case.

Acting on allegations that the senior official has amassed assets beyond his known sources of income, ACB teams led by DSP Majid Ali Khan took up simultaneous searches at around 12 locations, including Ravinder's residences and properties linked to his relatives and family members, and the HMDA office.

Officials are verifying documents, financial records and other assets as part of the ongoing investigation.

The searches were still underway at the time of filing this report, and further details are awaited.

One dead, 10 injured in attack on 2 ships, India lodges protest with Iran

New Delhi, July 14

India on Tuesday summoned Iran's Deputy Chief of Mission in New Delhi and lodged a strong protest after attacks on two commercial vessels transiting the Strait of Hormuz left an Indian seafarer dead and 10 others injured.

The Ministry of External Affairs said it was deeply concerned over the attacks on MT Al Bahiyah and MT Mombasa, which together had 30 Indian seafarers among their combined crew of 46. According to the MEA, of the 12 Indians aboard MT Al Bahiyah, one was killed and another injured. Of the 18 Indians on MT Mombasa, nine sustained injuries, including two whose condition is stated to be critical. “Our mis-

sion and post in the UAE are closely monitoring the situation and are in touch with the UAE authorities to ensure all possible assistance to the affected Indian seafarers,” the MEA said, adding that Iran's Deputy Chief of Mission was summoned on Tuesday morning and a “strong protest” lodged over the attacks. The ministry extended condolences to the family of the deceased sailor and wished a speedy recovery to those injured. The UAE Ministry of Defence had earlier said the two UAE-flagged tankers were struck by Iranian cruise missiles while transiting the southern shipping lane of the Strait of Hormuz within Omani territorial waters. The attack caused fires and material damage to both vessels, though the blazes were later brought under control.

Bhagyanagar District SIR Strategy Meet Reinforces Organizational Unity



“Hyderabad, July 14: A district-level SIR Strategy Meeting was successfully held today under the leadership of Bhagyanagar District President Shri Niranjana to strengthen organizational coordination and review future action plans.”The meeting was graced by Hon’ble Rajya

Ashok, and other state and district leaders, were present.”District General Secretary Shri Aedla Pandarinath actively participated in the meeting and played an important role in the discussions focused on strengthening the organization and ensuring the effective implementation of SIR initiatives across the district.”The meeting witnessed the participation of Shakti Kendra In-Charges, Division Presidents, Division General Secretaries, District Office Bearers, State Leaders, State Executive Members, Former Corporators, Contesting MLAs, and several senior party functionaries.”The meeting concluded with a collective resolve to enhance grassroots coordination, strengthen the organizational structure, and successfully implement the SIR program throughout Bhagyanagar District.”[11:32 PM, 7/14/2026] New English Paper Hemanth Reddy: Madam above news in second page



Sabha MP Smt. Alka Gurjar as the Chief Guest. Senior leaders, including SIR Telangana In-Charge Shri Shashidhar Reddy, State General Secretary Shri Vemula

Child Chess Prodigy Velpula Abhigna Shines in National FIDE-Rated Tournament

“Hyderabad: Child chess player Velpula Abhigna delivered an impressive performance at the Mahavir Chakra Colonel Santosh Babu All India Open Rapid FIDE Rated Chess Tournament-2026, held in Hyderabad.”The prestigious tournament witnessed participation from nearly 700 players representing various states across the country. Making her debut in a national-level FIDE-rated event, Abhigna competed in the Open category and secured 9th place in the Under-7 division, earning widespread appreciation for her remarkable

chess career.”The winners were felicitated by the parents of Mahavir Chakra awardee, the late Colonel Santosh Babu. During the ceremony, the chief guests paid tribute to the brave soldier’s exemplary service and supreme sacrifice for the nation.”Speaking on the occasion, Colonel Santosh Babu’s father drew a powerful comparison between chess and life, saying, “Chess is like a battlefield. Even if you lose key pieces such as the queen, rook, or knight, true victory lies in staying focused on the objective and ultimately delivering checkmate.”Expressing her gratitude, Abhigna thanked her chess coach Ravibabu for encouraging her to participate in a FIDE-rated tournament and for providing consistent guidance and training.”Abhigna’s father, Mr. Ajay Kumar, a senior veteran journalist with a prominent Telugu news channel, has been a constant source of motivation and encouragement throughout her chess journey. His unwavering support, coupled with the dedication of her family and coach, has played a significant role in shaping her success and inspiring her to compete at



performance.”Adding to her achievement, Abhigna gained valuable competitive experience by facing highly rated players, including an Arena International Master (AIM), marking an important milestone in her budding

the national level.”Abhigna’s commendable performance has been widely appreciated by her parents, coaches, and members of the chess fraternity, who believe she has the potential to achieve greater milestones in Indian chess.

Pradeep Constructions Seeks High Court Relief Against Cancellation of Building Permissions

“Eyes Secret Bureau”Hyderabad | July 14:“Pradeep Constructions has approached the Telangana High Court seeking relief against the cancellation of building permissions for its high-rise residential project near Necklace Road in Somajiguda, Hyderabad. The petition, filed by the company’s managing partner, Pradeep Reddy, challenges the legality of the government’s decision and questions the role of HYDRAA in the matter.”The writ petition names the Hyderabad Metropolitan Development Authority (HMDA), Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation (GHMC), HYDRAA, the Municipal Administration and Urban Development (MAUD) Department, the Irrigation Department, and the original land sellers as respondents.”According to the petition, the project had received valid building approvals from GHMC, and construction was undertaken after investing substantial resources based on those permissions. The petitioner argues that revoking the approvals years later on the grounds of alleged regulatory violations is arbitrary, violates the principles of natural justice, and causes severe financial and operational losses.”Pradeep Constructions has also objected to HYDRAA’s intervention, contending that the agency lacks the statutory authority to issue notices concerning building permissions. The petition claims that such actions exceed HYDRAA’s legal jurisdiction and infringe upon the company’s rights.”Seeking interim relief, the petitioner has requested the High Court to suspend the implementation of the cancellation notices issued by GHMC,



HYDRAA, and other government departments until the final adjudication of the case. The company maintains that it acted in good faith by relying on officially granted approvals and that the subsequent withdrawal of those permissions is legally unsustainable.”The Telangana High Court is expected to hear the matter and determine whether the cancellation of the building permissions and the involvement of HYDRAA were consistent with the law. The outcome could have wider implications for regulatory governance, urban development, and investor confidence in approved real estate projects across Telangana.

World Champion Boxer Nikhat Zareen Calls on Telangana DGP After DSP Appointment



“HYDERABAD, July 14:“International boxing champion and newly appointed Deputy Superintendent of Police (DSP) Nikhat Zareen paid a courtesy visit to Telangana Director General of Police (DGP) C.V. Anand at the DGP Headquarters in Hyderabad on Monday.”The DGP congratulated Nikhat on her outstanding achievements in international boxing and said her success is an inspiration to young people, especially women. He highlighted the importance of hard work, discipline, and determination in both sports and policing, expressing confidence that she would excel in her new role while continuing to bring glory to India.”Nikhat Zareen thanked the Telangana Government and the Police Department for the honour and expressed her commitment to serving the state with dedication. She also reaffirmed her determination to continue competing internationally and winning more medals for the country.”The meeting reflected Telangana Police’s pride in welcoming a world champion athlete into its ranks.

Driver Absconds with Rs 3 Lakh Meant for Property Registration; Case Registered



“Hyderabad, July 14: A driver allegedly fled with ₹3 lakh in cash entrusted to him by his employer for a property registration, prompting the LB Nagar Police to register a criminal case and launch a search for the accused.”According to the police, the accused, identified as Vishnu, a resident of Narsingi village in Rangareddy district, had joined as a driver with Mudireddy Ashok Reddy about a month ago. On the day of the incident, the employer reportedly handed



over ₹3 lakh to Vishnu and instructed him to carry the cash to the Sub-Registrar’s Office for the registration of a plot.”Instead of reaching the registration office, Vishnu allegedly disappeared with the cash and has remained untraceable since. After repeated attempts to contact him failed, the employer approached the driver’s family members and informed them about the incident.”The complainant alleged that Vishnu’s parents requested him not to take immediate legal action, citing a family function, and assured him on several occasions that they would persuade their son to return the money. However, despite nearly 20 days having passed, neither the accused nor the cash has been traced.”With no progress in recovering the money, Mudireddy Ashok Reddy lodged a formal complaint with the LB Nagar Police Station. Based on the complaint, police registered a case and initiated an investigation.”Police said efforts are underway to trace the accused, who is believed to be absconding. Further investigation is in progress.

Ecotani | Climate change and tourist rush pose challenges to pristine glacial-clad Kinnaur



An old monk in Nako village in Himachal’s Kinnaur district, Wanktoo Lama, wearing a traditional Buddhist robe and a green Himachali cap, is exasperated with the rise in temperature in this lake village in the upper Himalayas.Standing outside the Buddhist monastery in Nako, Lama’s wrinkled face showed signs of disbelief as he said that it had never been so hot in Nako. He predicted that the village could face a drinking water crisis if it continues to heat up the same way it did in the summer of 2024.As per the India Meteorological Department (IMD), this summer, Kinnaur witnessed the highest maximum summer temperatures in the past 50 years.

The maximum temperature in Nako crossed 30 degrees Celsius this summer, melting the snow on the peak above the village and forcing locals to shun their light winter wear.”It is so hot that we have dumped our jackets and pullovers,” said another villager, Recham Lama, who runs a utility shop with his mother on Nako highway which was brimming with tourists from across India.The long-term impact of climate change can be seen in the tribal districts of Kinnaur and Lahaul/Spiti. The flat roofs of homes in Nako are being replaced with tin pent roofs as the region, which once only received snow, is now getting rain.”When I was a young boy,” Wanktoo said, pointing at a young tourist at the newly built monastery with tin pent roof, “there was no rain here.”It only used to snow and the village was covered in snow for seven to 10 months in a year. We cleared snow from the roofs and the bright sun dried the (flat) roof in a day,” the 82-year-old monk, who has lived his entire life in the village, said.That is not the case now. He said Nako now receives heavy monsoon rain and because of this water leaks from the stone and mud roofs, making traditional homes uninhabitable. “People are putting tinned roofs to deal with rains,” Recham said.The rains have gifted the cold desert a rich cash crop of apples that has replaced the traditional crops of buckwheat locally called ‘ogla’ and ‘fafda’ in the past two to three decades and has brought economic prosperity for locals, who had to deal with harsh weather conditions.

The locals have developed apple orchards through

terrace farming on the steep slopes near water sources such as rivers and streams. Most of the orchards survive due to irrigation from the Satluj river, its tributaries and local streams.The apple orchards have also brought its ills such as hordes of pesticides and insecticides used to control farm diseases, which have emerged with higher temperatures. The high use of chemicals could also have polluted some of the rare water sources in the cold desert.Better roads and demand for connectivity in recent decades have resulted in a high inflow of tourists into mountainous tribal areas. There was a traffic jam in Nako village – unheard of even a few years ago – caused by vehicles from other parts of Himachal, Punjab, Haryana, Delhi and even from far-off states Gujarat, Rajasthan and Maharashtra in the last week of June.A local in Sangla, another tourist hotspot in Kinnaur district, said that there was a kilometre-long traffic jam on the narrow road to Chitkul, the last Indian village on the border with China, in the first week of June. “At some locations, police had to be deployed to manage haphazard parking of vehicles leading to jams. There was a very heavy rush of tourists this year,” he said.The states of Himachal and Uttarakhand witnessed an unprecedented rush of tourists this summer as holiday-makers rushed to the mountains to escape heatwave conditions reported from many areas in the plains: Shimla, a town of a hundred thousand people recorded half a million tourist vehicles in the first week of June.Over 2.8 million people have visited the sacred ‘Char Dham’ in Uttarakhand between May 7 and June 30, double the number that came for pilgrimage in the same period in 2023. A high tourist flow was also recorded in Nainital and Mussoorie, two popular hill stations, in Uttarakhand.As the weather gets warmer, unprecedented numbers of tourists are reaching far-flung areas up the pristine upper Himalayas with scant respect for local ecology and environment. Many among them dump plastic along the way; small eateries that cater to them add to the pollution because they operate without waste disposal mechanisms.One could see plastic waste strewn around the sacred Nako Lake, which many tourists, and along the highway between Nako and Pooh, especially at tourist spots such as ‘Khab Sangam’.As the number of people visiting these places is increasing and the climate is slowly but surely changing due to global warming, the Union government needs to frame a tourist management and environment policy, working in tandem with the governments of Himachal, Uttarakhand and Jammu and Kashmir.The policy needs to focus on regulating the flow of tourists to remote and pristine areas of the Himalayas to put new destinations on the map for tourists to explore and reduce the pressure on the usual tourist spots.This would not only help local economies to flourish but also possibly prevent human-induced degradation of the Himalayas which is a young mountain range.Chetan Chauhan, national affairs editor, analyses the most important environment and political story in the country this week

EYE SECRETS Editorial

Can AI help Hyderabad grow without losing its ecological soul?

Hyderabad today is almost unrecognisable from what it was two decades ago. Once celebrated mainly for its history, culture, and emerging IT industry, it has evolved into one of India's fastest-growing cities. New residential colonies spread across the outskirts, high-rise towers dominate the skyline, metro lines extend further each year, and large infrastructure projects continue to reshape the city. It is a remarkable story of ambition and progress. But it also raises an uncomfortable question: Can Hyderabad continue to grow without placing unbearable pressure on the very resources that sustain it?

Rapid urbanisation has undoubtedly brought jobs, investment, and new opportunities to Telangana. Yet, it has also exposed the city to challenges that are becoming harder to ignore. Groundwater levels are falling in many areas. Lakes that once acted as natural buffers and water sources are steadily shrinking. Heavy rains increasingly lead to urban flooding. Summers feel hotter than before, while green spaces struggle to survive amid expanding concrete landscapes. At the same time, demand for water, energy, housing, transport, and waste management continues to rise in a region with limited natural resources. This is where the growing interest in artificial intelligence, or AI, enters the conversation. Around the world, AI is being projected as a game-changing technology capable of transforming every aspect of life. But from the perspective of those who study the Earth and its resources, its greatest strength is not its ability to replace people. Its real value lies in helping us make better decisions. AI can detect patterns and predict risks, but it cannot replace field-based evidence, local knowledge, or transparent public decision-making. The Earth does not function in neat, predictable ways. Rivers alter their courses. Rainfall patterns shift. Groundwater declines slowly and often unnoticed. Changes in land use affect ecosystems in ways that may only become apparent years later. In a rapidly expanding city like Hyderabad, every new road, apartment complex, industrial estate, or commercial hub leaves its environmental footprint. Understanding these connections requires more than advanced computing power. It demands scientific knowledge, local experience, and responsible governance. AI can certainly become an important ally. It can analyse satellite imagery and vast datasets to monitor urban expansion, identify encroachments on lakes and drainage channels, detect emerging heat islands, assess land-use changes, map flood-prone areas, and track groundwater stress. Tasks that once required months of painstaking effort can now be completed much faster.

But technology alone cannot provide all the answers. An AI system may identify unusual patterns in satellite imagery. Yet it takes experienced scientists, planners, and local experts to determine whether those patterns reflect drought conditions, seasonal changes, data errors, or genuine environmental degradation. Algorithms can spot trends, but they cannot replace field observations, community understanding, or accountability in public decision-making. Another obstacle is the perception that AI is too technical for anyone outside computer science. The terminology can be intimidating. In reality, the questions behind AI are familiar to every good scientist and policymaker:

2 dead, mother and son hospitalised after alleged family suicide attempt in Patiala

Patiala DSP (City-I) Sanjeev Singla said, "As per the statement given by the woman, the entire family attempted suicide as they were under stress due to some financial dispute. The district court judge has recorded her statement."

Patiala family suicide attempt left 2 people dead and 2 hospitalised, with the police probing the circumstances and possible financial stress behind the incident (Image generated by AI) Patiala family suicide attempt left 2 people dead and 2 hospitalised, with the police probing the circumstances and possible financial stress behind the incident Two members of a family died, and two others are hospitalised after allegedly attempting suicide in Patiala on Wednesday.

The dead have been identified as a 45-year-old bank employee and his teenage daughter. The dead man's wife and their 11-year-old son are undergoing treatment at Rajindra Medical College in the city.

Patiala DSP (City-I) Sanjeev Singla said, "As per the statement given by the woman, the entire family attempted suicide as they were under stress due to some financial dispute. The district court judge has recorded her statement." The police said they were probing all possible angles. They added that statements of relatives, neighbours, and other persons known to the family were also being recorded to ascertain the circumstances leading to the incident. The bodies of the deceased have been sent for post-mortem examination.

Abandoned, with severed arm, Bihar teen says his first time away from home also his last



A year after he was discovered staggering along Taudu Road near Nuh in Haryana with his left arm severed below the elbow, bleeding and allegedly deserted by his employer, a 16-year-old teen is set to get Rs 10 lakh as compensation. Recently, the Haryana State Human Rights Commission, that took suo motu cognizance of the matter, awarded the teenager the relief, saying: "The victim-child has suffered not only physical injury but mental agony." Back in his village in Kishanganj district of Bihar, the family says, the 16-year-old has begun adjusting to life with his disability, helping look after their two-three goats and a cow. The 16-year-old is one of six siblings, aged between 15 and 26, with their father, 48, a daily wage labourer. The latter worries that the compensation will barely cover the cost of an artificial limb. "What we really need is enough money to buy a buffalo so that we can have a regular income," he says over the phone. He is also unsure how to go about procuring the artificial limb for the 16-year-old. "An official at an orphanage in Patna told us it would have to be imported," the father says, impressed that such a limb may help the teenager "lift around 10 kg". The 16-year-old had left home in early May 2025 along with 10 others to work on a road construction project in Kangra, Himachal Pradesh. Every year, 200-300 people from their village alone travel to North India for work, the father says. For the 16-year-old, it was his first time so far from home. A contractor offered an advance of Rs 2,000, and he left, without informing the family as he wanted to "earn some money" and was apprehensive they may not let him leave. But it wasn't easy living on his own, he discovered. "One day at the construction site, hot tar fell on my body. I didn't tell my mother as I didn't want her to worry." However, the 16-year-old adds, she sensed something was amiss. So, less than a month later, his father reached Kangra along with his elder brother to get him. On May 27, 2025, the three of them boarded the general coach of the Farakka Express that runs from Delhi to Malda. When the train chugged into the Bahadurgarh Railway Station in Haryana in the evening, they got off to

get some food – and the teenager got left behind. As it got dark, the scared 16-year-old was approached by a local, Anil Kumar, who offered help. Instead, Anil took him to his dairy and put him to work, allegedly beating him when he resisted and denying him any contact with his family. Two months later, on July 27 evening, as the 16-year-old was cutting fodder, his left arm got caught in a chaff-cutter machine and was severed below the elbow into many small pieces. His first reaction was to "look for my arm", says the teenager. "But I could not find it." In their notings, the authorities recorded that Anil only gave the teenager some medicines at home. "Fearing police, he abandoned him between Rasulpur and Baroli villages near Hasanpur, giving him Rs 10,000 and promising more later," wrote Additional Chief Secretary Sudhir Rajpal. That was the only money Anil gave him for his two months of work at his dairy, the 16-year-old says. "I wandered the roads for a day and two nights with my amputated hand. A rehri wala gave me food... In the morning, a schoolteacher found me." Arvind, who belongs to Rewari, told police he spotted the 16-year-old at 8 am on July 29, dressed only in his undergarments. After the bandage that Anil had tied around the wound bled through, the teenager tore up his shirt to use as a dressing. The teacher, who took him to the Sadar Police Station in Nuh, told police that when he asked the 16-year-old where he was headed, he just said, "Bihar". Police took the teenager to hospital and it was after two unsuccessful surgical interventions that PGIMS Rohtak managed to stabilise the 16-year-old's wound. Meanwhile, the family had been searching frantically for the teenager, putting up posters at several places across Haryana. The breakthrough came when the 16-year-old reached the Nuh Police Station, and told police the name of his native village in Bihar. His eldest brother, who has studied the most in the family, up to Intermediate level, was in Kaithal at the time, for the paddy transplantation season. "I received a call from home informing me to rush to the Nuh police station," the brother recalls, talking about his shock at seeing the 16-year-old's state. All the 16-year-old could tell police was that he was kept at 'Anil Dairy', and the names of Anil's children. IPS officer Nitika Gahlaut says they searched more than 250 villages across Delhi, Noida, Ghaziabad, Palwal and Faridabad. Three Special Investigation Teams were deployed, with officials visiting villages and making video calls to the teenager to see if he could identify something. A tip-off from a village sarpanch took them to Greater Gautam Buddha Nagar in Uttar Pradesh. Finally, on December 30, 2025, Anil was arrested. His bail applications have since been rejected thrice, including by the High Court. The 16-year-old, who only studied till Class 5, talks about his limited options, but how he "doesn't want to go anywhere for work anymore".

Ex-Punjab cop convicted in Khalra case faces prison address check



Nearly three decades after the abduction and murder of Punjab human rights activist Jaswant Singh Khalra, one of the key convicts in the case, former deputy superintendent of police Jaspal Singh, has once again come under the spotlight amid the controversy surrounding the Diljit Dosanjh-starrer Satluj. Jaspal, who is in his late 60s, was granted interim bail in May 2023. Authorities at Nabha Open Air Jail recently sought a routine verification of his present address from Hoshiarpur police, as the address available in prison records falls within the district. The verification exercise comes days after Satluj, based on Khalra's life and disappearance, was taken down from a OTT platform after being available for 48 hours. Jaspal's character features prominently in the film, bringing renewed attention to one of Punjab's most high-profile human rights cases. "Though I am yet to go through any official email or so in this connection, yes, I got to know that some intimation has come from Nabha Open Air Jail. As the stay address has been mentioned in Hoshiarpur district, we have been asked to provide details. He was out on interim bail and such a communication seeking whereabouts details is a routine check, nothing extraordinary," Sandeep Malik, Senior Superintendent of Police, Hoshiarpur, told The Indian Express. Attempts to contact Nabha Open Air Jail Superintendent Chanchal Kumari for comments were unsuccessful. Police sources said the verification should not be seen as an indication that the convict is absconding. They pointed out that a person released on bail is not necessarily required to remain at the address initially furnished and that periodic verifica-

tion of residential details is a routine administrative exercise. Sources added that the Hoshiarpur police have only been asked to verify the address, while Jaspal continued to remain under the jurisdiction of Nabha prison authorities. According to official records, Jaspal's native place is Cheema Nagar in Jalandhar district, while a later address available with authorities is that of Majhi village in Hoshiarpur district. Jaspal was one of the principal accused in the abduction and murder of Khalra, who disappeared from outside his residence in Amritsar on September 6, 1995, six days after the assassination of then Punjab chief minister Beant Singh on August 31, 1995. Khalra had exposed the alleged illegal cremation of thousands of unidentified bodies during Punjab's militancy period. Following an investigation by the Central Bureau of Investigation, Jaspal and several other Punjab Police personnel were charge-sheeted for abducting Khalra, illegally confining him, murdering him in police custody, and destroying evidence. According to the prosecution's case, Khalra was shot dead inside a police station. His body was allegedly transported in the trunk of a vehicle and disposed of in a canal near Harike in an attempt to destroy evidence. In November 2005, a CBI court in Patiala convicted Jaspal of criminal conspiracy, kidnapping, murder and destruction of evidence and sentenced him to life imprisonment. His conviction was upheld by the Punjab and Haryana High Court in 2007 and later by the Supreme Court in 2011.

Among the six policemen convicted in the case, Jaspal was the seniormost officer. The other convicts were sub-inspectors Amarjit Singh, Satnam Singh, Surinder Pal Singh and Jasbir Singh, besides head constable Prithpal Singh. Jaspal Singh had moved an application seeking premature release in 2017, but the proposal was rejected by the Centre, sources said. During the COVID-19 pandemic, when prisons were decongested following directions of a Supreme Court-mandated committee, thousands of convicts and undertrials were released on parole and interim bail in phases. Sources said Jaspal was released in November 2021 under this exercise. Subsequently, a court order dated August 16, 2022 directed him to surrender. Later, in May 2023, the court of the Chief Judicial Magistrate, Patiala, granted him interim bail.

No child should face stigma of jail birth like Lord Krishna, says court, granting Nida Khan bail in TCS Nashik case

Invoking Lord Krishna's birth in captivity, a special court in Nashik granted bail to Nida Khan, a TCS employee accused in the alleged religious coercion case, observing that no child should have to endure the trauma or social stigma of being born in prison. Nida Khan, who is five months pregnant, was granted bail on Monday, over two months after her arrest. The detailed order, made available on Thursday, said it would be "just and proper" to exercise judicial discretion in her favour in the interest of her unborn child. "It is not disputed that applicant Nida is five months pregnant. The trauma of taking birth in a prison like Lord Krishna or the social stigma attached to it is not sufferable to anyone. To avoid such a distressing situation, and for the welcoming and overall well-being of a newborn baby, it would be just and proper to exercise judicial discretion in favour of the applicant-accused," special judge K G Joshi said in the order. Khan is one of eight employees accused in the TCS Nashik case, in which

Nashik city police registered nine FIRs between March 26 and April 3 alleging sexual harassment and religious conversion of colleagues at a TCS BPO office in Nashik. Khan, the only woman among the accused, was named only in the Deolali Camp FIR. She is accused of hurting religious sentiments and "influencing" a colleague to practice Islamic traditions by allegedly giving her a burqa and religious books and installing religious apps on her phone. She was arrested on May 7 from a house in Chhatrapati Sambhajnagar after a sessions court rejected her anticipatory bail plea. The court set several conditions on Khan, including prohibiting her from entering the workplace or residential vicinity of the complainant. It also prohibited her from contacting the complainant, any witness or anyone directly related to the case, or interfering with evidence. She has also been directed not to leave the country without the court's permission and to inform the court and investigators of her address and contact number.

Defying pay cut threat, Maharashtra teachers join protest against BLO duties, over 60% schools shut



Despite the state government's warning that teachers participating in Thursday's state-wide school shutdown would forfeit a day's salary, thousands of educators joined protests across Maharashtra, including a large gathering at Mumbai's Azad Maidan. Over 60 per cent government and aided schools remained shut on Thursday as hundreds of teachers joined the demonstrations, calling for a complete waiver of non-academic duties.

The state-wide demonstration, called jointly by several teachers' associations, is primarily aimed at protesting against the Booth Level Officer (BLO) duties being assigned to the teachers for the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls. They have also demanded withdrawal of all FIRs registered against those who did not report to BLO duties. Apart from a large gathering at Azad Maidan in Mumbai, multiple district level demonstrations were also held across Maharashtra. (Express Photo by Akash Patil) Apart from a large gathering at Azad Maidan in Mumbai, multiple district level demonstrations were also held across Maharashtra.

Apart from the non-academic work being assigned to the teachers that the associations say was adversely affecting the quality of education by keeping educators away from their classrooms, the agitation also underlines a range of long-pending issues, including changes to the Teachers Eligibility Test (TET) framework, promotion policy, and staffing norms. Over 60% schools shut amid teachers' strike

The associations have claimed that over 60 percent of government and aided schools across the state remained shut as teachers participated in the strike. Apart from a large gathering at Azad Maidan in Mumbai, multiple district level demonstrations were also held across Maharashtra. Subhash More from Shikshak Bharati, one of the organisations spearheading the agitation, said the participation of the teachers in big numbers shows how frustrated they have been.

"Teachers are fully aware of the disciplinary action they may face, yet they have participated in overwhelming numbers. This shows the level of frustration they are experiencing, while the government seems to be ignoring all the issues being raised consistently," he said. The teachers had already spent their entire summer break engaged in census work, only to find that the load of non-academic responsibilities continued even after the holidays. Upon their return to schools, many educators were served with BLO duty orders. Frustrated, the teachers' associations called for a state-wide school shutdown on Thursday, July 9. A day later, the Directorate of Secondary Education issued a circular, warning teachers against participating in the shutdown. Anil Bornare from Shikshak Mahasangh teachers' association said, "Now that teachers have called for a one-day shutdown, students' academic loss is suddenly being projected as a major concern. But when we point out that excessive non-academic duties are keeping teachers away from classrooms, those concerns are ignored."

What do teachers demand? The educators have demanded a total waiver from being given BLO duties and exemption from the mandatory TET requirement for teachers appointed before 2013. They argue that the teachers who were appointed before 2013 were recruited under the prevalent rules which, they say, cannot be questioned now. Until the demanded changes to the TET mandate are made, the protesting teachers have urged the government to modify the test's structure to evaluate in-service teachers.

Maharashtra picks Uniform Civil Code panel head. She prepped Uttarakhand law

Maharashtra minister Ashish Shelar on Thursday announced the formation of a committee headed by former Supreme Court judge, Justice Ranjana Desai, to draft rules and recommendations for implementing a Uniform Civil Code in the state. Justice Desai had earlier headed the panel that drafted the legislation for Uniform Civil Code in Uttarakhand.

The seven-member committee, the state government announced, will comprise former judges of the Supreme Court and High Court, and from various fields. The members include former Bombay High Court judges, Justice RC Chavan and Justice SG Mehare, former Maharashtra Chief Secretary DK Jain, the state's former Advocate General Birendra Saraf, social activist and Padma Shri awardee Ramesh Patange, and education expert Dr Suvarna Rawal.

Shelar made the announcement in the Maharashtra Legislative Council, and Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis in the Assembly. The state government aims to introduce the Uniform Civil Code legislation during the Winter Session in Nagpur after studying the committee's report.

What is Uniform Civil Code? The Uniform Civil Code refers to a common set of laws governing personal matters such as marriage, divorce, inheritance, adoption, maintenance and succession for all citizens, irrespective of religion, caste, community or faith.

At present, India follows separate personal laws for different religious communities. Hindus, Muslims, Christians, Parsis and other communities are governed by different legal provisions relating to marriage, divorce, inheritance and succession.

Political reality of Afghanistan has changed, UN sanctions regime must take this into account: India at UN

United Nations: India said the current UN sanctions regime must take into account the changed political reality of Afghanistan, and called for incentivising positive actions rather than only wielding tools of punishment."We lend our voice again in reemphasising the importance of incentivising positive actions. The political reality of Afghanistan has changed in the last five years and the current UN sanctions regime must take that into account," India's Permanent Representative to the UN Ambassador Harish Parvathaneni said.

Addressing the UN Security Council meeting on the 'Situation in Afghanistan' Monday, Parvathaneni said the UN and international community need policy instruments that aim to benefit the people of Afghanistan and "nudge policy in the right direction rather than only wielding tools of punishment that are yielding diminishing returns." Several leaders of the Taliban, which took control of Kabul in August 2021, are listed under the 1988 Taliban Sanc-

tions Committee of the UN Security Council.In October last year, the Taliban Sanctions Committee had approved an exemption to the travel ban imposed on Taliban leader and acting Afghan Foreign Minister Amir Khan Muttaqi, who had then visited India later that month.He added that the history of close cooperation between India and Afghanistan are continues to guide their modern-day relationship."The proud people of Afghanistan have endured a lot in this century and the Government of India will continue to stand in favour of peace and stability so as to foster development and stability in this nation," he said.He also noted that India's capacity building and Humanitarian Assistance initiatives for the Afghan people can be seen in all 34 provinces and in more than 500 development partnership projects."The visits to India of Afghan Ministers last year have ensured necessary planning and coordination so that our support reaches the intended beneficiaries.

Trump says pilots are fine after US helicopter crashes near Strait of Hormuz

Dubai: A US Army Apache attack helicopter crashed near the Strait of Hormuz, with President Donald Trump saying the two crew members on board were "fine" after the incident involving the strategic waterway, which remains under a chokehold by Iran.What caused the crash remained unclear Tuesday morning in the Middle East, which was still reeling after Iran and Israel exchanged fire the previous day in the biggest blow yet to the straining ceasefire in the Iran war. Iranian state media, relying on foreign reporting, acknowledged the crash without elaborating.

Since the US and Israel began striking Iran on Feb. 28, the war has shaken the global economy, driven up energy prices around the world and made many basics, including food, more expensive. Officials have been unable to turn the April ceasefire into a deal to permanently end the conflict.Trump, speaking to journalists at John F. Kennedy International Airport in New York after watching the NBA Finals on Monday night, acknowledged the crash.

"The pilots are fine. Yeah," Trump said. "Nobody injured. We are going to issue a report tomorrow. But the pilots are fine." The New York Times first reported that a US Army Apache attack helicopter went down near the strait in unclear circumstances. The US military's Central Command and the Defense Department did not immedi-

ately respond to requests for comment from The Associated Press.Apache helicopters have been a key asset for the American military as it enforces a blockade on Iranian crude oil shipments and tankers, seeking to pressure Tehran into reaching a deal. The helicopters also have been used by the United Arab Emirates to shoot down Iranian drones during the Iran war."We have a good chance" of signing a deal in "two or three days," Trump said. But he didn't provide any details on why there was reason for new optimism."We're very close to having a very, very good, strong, powerful deal," the president said. "If we go and bomb – which we could do very easily if we want, and we spend another two or three weeks bombing – they'll have nothing left whatsoever. But you won't have the strait open for months." He added: "If we do the bombing, you know, a lot of people are going to be killed. Who wants to do that? I don't." Mediators, led predominantly by Pakistan, have been trying to weeks to get a deal across the line. However, both Iran and the US have taken hard-line positions.The US wants to see Iran give up its stockpile of highly enriched uranium, which is believed still to be entombed in the country after American airstrikes in the 12-day war in 2025. But Iran is refusing that and demanding relief from sanctions. It also wants the release of frozen assets even before a final agreement is in place, something rejected by Trump.

Bangladesh Awami League leaders seek EU support to lift sanctions on party

Dhaka: As the crackdown on Awami League leaders continues to intensify across Bangladesh, a delegation of the party's former lawmakers and leaders met Member of the European Parliament (MEP) Billy Kelleher to seek global cooperation for lifting sanctions imposed on the party, local media reported.During a meeting held on Monday in Ireland, the delegation urged the restoration of a "fair political and democratic atmosphere and the improvement of the human rights situation" in Bangladesh. The participants included MEP and former Irish minister Billy Kelleher; former Awami League MP Md Habibe Millat; Ireland Chhatra League President Noman Chowdhury; Ireland Awami League leader Rafiq Khan; and Radin Khan, Chairman of the student wing of Fianna Fail, Bangladeshi daily, Times of Bangladesh reported.The delegation sought the European Parliament's support for the withdrawal of sanctions and the securing of bail for party ministers, MPs, and activists detained in what they described as "politically motivated" cases.The Awami League leader Millat, briefed the MEP on a range of issues, including the current law and order situation in Bangladesh, the killing of police officers, incidents of mob violence, human rights abuses, the surge of militancy, and the culture of impunity.

Acknowledging the concerns, Kelleher expressed interest in raising these issues within the European Parliament and indicated his intention to pursue diplomatic pressure on the Bangladeshi government through formal discussions.

Meanwhile, a leading international human rights

Trump claims Iran ready for nuclear deal

Washington: US President Donald Trump said that Iran was willing to abandon its pursuit of nuclear weapons and sign an agreement with the United States, as he claimed American military operations had severely weakened Tehran's military capabilities.Speaking during a virtual tele-rally for South Carolina Senator Lindsey Graham ahead of Tuesday's Republican primary, Trump devoted much of his remarks to Iran, ongoing negotiations and the broader security situation in the Middle East. "We're negotiating now and they wanna make a very good deal. They're willing to give us everything. They're willing to give us no nuclear weapon," Trump said. "Iran cannot have a nuclear weapon and it's as simple as that."Trump claimed US military action had inflicted extensive damage on Iran's military infrastructure. "We've decimated their military. We've decimated their, everything there is to decimate, including their leadership," he said. "Their navy is totally gone. They had 159 ships. Every ship is underwater right now."

Telangana CEO directs BLOs not to seek physical SIR forms from online applicants

Hyderabad: The BLOs have been asked not to insist on the submission of physical enumeration forms from voters who completed the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) process online.Chief Electoral Officer, Telangana, C Sudarshan Reddy, issued an official communication on July 7 following reports that BLOs were insisting on physical enumeration forms despite electors having submitted their enumeration form online.However, even after specific instructions, a few BLOs continued to collect physical enumeration forms in some polling stations. A BLO said, "We are not demanding the forms but accepting them, in case any doubts arise in the enumeration forms

during the draft electoral rolls."

In some instances, the voters complained that though they submitted online enumeration forms, they did not receive either an acknowledgement or an SMS alert. As part of the proof of the document, voters visited the polling stations and submitted the enumeration forms.

BLOs clarified that if the enumerator filled out the enumeration form correctly, the portal would accept it and the process would be stated as completed. They said that if any information was filled out wrongly and the portal did not accept it, the elector had to resubmit the enumeration form with the correct details.

Under the Trump crypto playbook, the family always wins. Investors don't

It was January 2025, crypto fever was raging, and Donald J. Trump was preparing to return to the White House. So when Fatime Elrgdawy's friend told her about an online message from the U.S. president-elect hyping the launch of his own crypto coin – "GET YOUR \$TRUMP NOW" – she thought: "Oh my God, this is brilliant."If Trump was putting his name behind it, Elrgdawy recalls thinking, "it must be a legitimate investment."The 29-year-old software project engineer in Santa Barbara, California, put \$2,000 of her savings into the \$TRUMP meme coin – a purely speculative crypto token whose value is often driven by social media hype. All that remained, she thought, was to sit back and wait for the price to climb.

Instead, the price plummeted. At the end of May, her \$TRUMP holding was worth less than \$120. Meanwhile, the Trump family pocketed hundreds of millions of dollars from the token sales after putting little to none of their own money into the project.The \$TRUMP meme coin is one of four Trump family crypto projects that have turned into a financial jackpot for the Trumps and a very bad bet for buyers like Elrgdawy. While they vary in size and structure, each of these ventures has followed the same playbook. The Trumps risked little up front. Trump family members – notably, the president's oldest sons, Eric Trump and Donald Trump Jr. – hyped the venture. The Trumps raked in money as investors piled in. And those buyers lost big when, for various reasons, the prices of their Trump-related crypto assets later tanked.

A Reuters examination shows that the Trump family has used this template to generate at least \$2.3 billion in profit from investors since Trump retook the presidency. On the other side of that cash bonanza for America's first family: the more than a million investors whose net losses totaled \$2.3 billion at the end of April, according to a Reuters analysis. Those investors include retail buyers of crypto and crypto-linked equities, as well as those who invested indirectly through funds like ETFs with exposure to Trump crypto. The loss total includes paper losses on unsold investments.The Reuters analysis of Trump crypto gains and investor losses was based on a review of blockchain records – essentially a database of crypto transactions – thousands of pages of corporate filings, online disclosures by the Trump companies, and public remarks by the Trumps and their projects' executives, as well as interviews with crypto industry executives. The findings were reviewed by more than a dozen accounting and crypto experts, all of whom found Reuters' estimates and its underlying analysis of the Trump businesses to be reasonable.

The four businesses covered in the analysis include World Liberty Financial, the Trumps' flagship crypto venture. It has brought the family more than \$1.4 billion from sales of its governance tokens on a persistent promise "to build and democratize a new financial system for the benefit of millions," as it said in an early social media post. The tokens, which give holders a vote on some governance matters, have crashed in value.The Trump brothers have also heralded two publicly listed firms, American Bitcoin and AI Financial Corp, known as ALT5 Sigma until April, as convenient ways to gain exposure to crypto tokens through their shares. The companies' stock prices have collapsed. And there's the \$TRUMP token, its poor performance typical of meme coins, whose value reflects the popularity of internet trends or celebrities associated with them.

Reuters previously documented the hundreds of millions of dollars that crypto has brought to the Trump family. This report is the first to show that the Trumps have not only enriched themselves to an unprecedented extent for a sitting U.S. president and his family, but have done so through crypto deals that carried little to no downside risk for them while resulting in big losses for retail investors.

Since the November 2024 election, the president and his family have seized an enormous amount of the market for crypto token sales. Two of the four Trump ventures examined by Reuters have together sold more crypto tokens, by value, than any other crypto project but one, according to a Reuters analysis of industry data. And since the 2024 election, the Trumps have, as a family, generated more profit from crypto than any U.S.-listed company, according to company statements and industry data.White House spokesperson Anna Kelly did not comment directly on Reuters' findings and the experiences of investors who lost money on Trump crypto products. In an emailed statement, Kelly said: "All actions by President Trump and his administration are taken in the best interest of the American people."

All but three of the 27 individual investors interviewed for this article said they knew of Donald Trump's history of bankruptcies, unpaid contractors and failed ventures. Still, most said they believed that his position at the apex of American political power and what they perceived as his business acumen ensured lucrative returns on their investments. Many acknowledged doing little or no due diligence. Some said they still hold on to the hope that Trump will make things right. Others expressed regret, anger and embarrassment.They range from a Minnesota software engineer who said he lost \$60,000 of his savings to a hotel manager in Vietnam who lost years' worth of his income. They include the owner of an import-export business in Texas, a hospitality executive in Washington, D.C., and a retiree from New York.

Elrgdawy said it has become clear that "there's no hope left" for her investment in the \$TRUMP meme coin. She said she now thinks "it was just a pump and dump scheme" – when sellers of an asset talk up its price and then "dump" it for a profit before it crashes. Still, she said she considers herself lucky compared to other \$TRUMP buyers who, in online chat groups, bemoan much steeper losses on a meme coin that has tumbled 97% from its January 2025 peak.Elrgdawy said that in retrospect, she sees the \$TRUMP meme coin as "just a pump and dump scheme." REUTERS/Daniel ColeElrgdawy was one of only seven retail buyers of Trump crypto who agreed to be identified for this story. The rest requested anonymity, the most common reasons being concerns about privacy and fears of doxxing or of retaliation, including from the president and his supporters.Matt, a 45-year-old machinist in Indiana, said that last September, he was looking to reverse recent investment losses, so he put \$40,000 – 30% of his crypto and stock portfolio at the time – in ALT5 Sigma shares. "When a stock has presidential backing in a way – at least from his sons – you would think it would go up," he said.Matt's shares have dropped 79% in value since he bought them, for a loss of about \$32,700. He keeps holding on, he said, because he thinks the stock is undervalued. "I call myself a loser, but I haven't given up yet," he said.

He does not blame the Trump family. He said he

believes Democrats and anti-Trump investors are taking short positions – a bet that an asset's price will fall – in the family's crypto projects. "Here's the dark side. I know all of these globalists have TDS and they are just going to short it," he said, using the acronym for "Trump Derangement Syndrome," the term Trump supporters use to describe what they see as an irrationally negative reaction to the president. He asked that his surname not be used to avoid politically charged blowback online and from people in his community.

A 45-year-old Texas businessman who put \$5,000 into American Bitcoin said he bought the stock because "I just feel like Trump knows business." He said he bought his shares at an average price of \$4.19 last autumn. He sold all of them in December at about \$3.50, for a total loss of about \$800.The Texan said he doesn't hold the president responsible for the losses: "All the crypto is down right now, so you can't just squarely blame it on Trump." He added that he expects crypto to bounce back and that he recently started buying American Bitcoin again, at \$1.13.

Only five of the investors reported making a profit. Four of them bought World Liberty tokens for pennies during early rounds of sales and then quickly unloaded what they could when 20% of their tokens became tradeable on crypto exchanges. They are still, hypothetically, in the money on the remaining 80% of their holdings, but won't be able to cash out until World Liberty fully unlocks their tokens in 2030. The fifth investor made a profit day trading the meme coin.John Paul Rollert, whose research focus at the University of Chicago Booth School of Business includes the history of capitalism and business leadership ethics, said retail investors should have asked themselves before committing whether the Trump family would make money even if the crypto ventures failed. If the answer was yes, "you're now getting closer to what looks like a scam," said Rollert, an adjunct associate professor of behavioral science.

World Liberty disclosed in fine print at the bottom of its website and elsewhere that the Trump family would receive the lion's share of revenue from token sales. In marketing materials, it included disclaimers that its token was not an investment and that buyers should not expect to make a profit. The website for the \$TRUMP meme coin contains similar warnings.More broadly, U.S. financial regulators for years warned investors large and small that crypto was highly volatile and rife with scams. While such alerts have dissipated since Trump returned to the White House, financial authorities in many other countries have continued with that message.THAT'S THEIR BUSINESS'

Renowned investor Wilbur Ross, who served as commerce secretary during Trump's first term, said that, as with other U.S. politicians and their families, the Trumps are free to make money. As for individual investors, "if people are going to buy something that's speculative, they ought to be aware there's a risk," said Ross, currently vice chairman of crypto company ReserveOne Inc. He added: "If they chose to continue on as a holder, hoping it would go up more, well, that's their business." Ross said he has not invested in any Trump crypto ventures.

Investors poured money into the Trump family's ventures as the wider crypto market was riding high, buoyed by bets that a second Trump presidency would accelerate the emerging asset class's entry into mainstream finance. On taking office, Trump began to put in place policies and initiatives seen as beneficial to the industry, from implementing federal rules for stablecoins to dialing back policing of the industry by the U.S. Justice Department and the Securities and Exchange Commission.Eight government ethics experts interviewed by Reuters said that the Trump family's enriching itself from an industry that the president's administration regulates – and that the president himself has championed – represents a conflict of interest unlike anything seen in modern American history. They noted, though, that while this departure from established norms is unethical and unprecedented, it is legal, provided the family does not exchange access to the president or regulatory favors for financial gain.

In her statement, White House spokesperson Kelly said: "Neither the President nor his family has ever engaged – or will ever engage – in conflicts of interest. President Trump proudly made the United States the crypto capital of the world through executive actions." The licensing deals are the best of all deals because there's no risk. The licensing deals are better because you don't put up any capital.

David Wachsmann, spokesman for World Liberty Financial, said in an email response to Reuters' request for comment: "World Liberty Financial is a private American financial technology company, not a political organization, and it is frankly un-American to suggest that a private enterprise in the United States cannot conduct business."The Trumps have reaped \$2.3 billion from their crypto ventures by following a time-tested business model Donald Trump has applied to real estate – lending his family name to a project, rather than staking his own money. "The licensing deals are the best of all deals because there's no risk," Trump told Reuters in 2016. "The licensing deals are better because you don't put up any capital."

A CRYPTO CASH MACHINEDuring the past year and a half, the president and his sons Eric and Donald Jr. have supercharged that approach, leveraging their vast media reach to turn the family's crypto ventures into a global crypto cash machine.The main component of that machine is World Liberty Financial. In October 2024, the venture, whose co-founders include the Trumps and a few longtime associates, began selling crypto tokens, with the brothers acting as primary pitchmen. They traveled the globe to amplify World Liberty's stated plan to democratize finance, allowing anyone to bypass a traditional banking system they characterized as restrictive and unfair.They aimed their pitch at potential crypto investors large and small, including accredited American investors – those who meet certain income and net worth requirements under U.S. regulations. For 1.5 U.S. cents per token, buyers would have limited rights to vote on key decisions about the platform, but they wouldn't be entitled to any share of profits.Just before token sales got underway, Donald Trump urged his millions of followers on the social media site X to buy, posting: "@WorldLibertyFi is planning to help make America the crypto capital of the world! The whitelist for eligible persons is officially open – this is your chance to be part of this historic moment."

Qatar fans get government-funded trip to the World Cup to support underdog team



Six minutes later came more concerted proof of his diminishing touch. Conceição produced another, better cutback, but Ronaldo shanked it away. The shot was hurried and without power, bothered perhaps by Axel Tuanzebe's challenge. But those were moments that barely troubled him once. He could find the target through a maze of legs, unfazed by shirt-pullers and pickpockets, outmuscling and outwitting them. Here, he was vexed, riddled with doubt. There is a cruel paradox. A man whose career was built on smouldering self-belief has begun to doubt himself. Perhaps that is at the heart of his malaise — the absolute faith in himself blinding him to the reality of his tottering prowess. Ronaldo is no longer who he thinks he is. He is still supernaturally fit, with the vaulting ambition to win the only crown his head has not worn, that of a world champion. But he is making a parody of the great player he once was. He is the aged leading vocalist of a heavy metal band living in the guttural grandeur of his past, unaware that his voice box has only been creaking. There is a cruel paradox. A man whose career was built on smouldering self-belief had begun to doubt himself. Perhaps, that is at the heart of his malaise... Ronaldo is no longer who he thinks he is.

When he cannot score, he becomes a liability — he is not involved in creative or defensive duties, his real estate of influence limited. Some numbers capture his horrid game. He made only 20 passes in 90 minutes, the thirteenth best in the game. His defensive contribution was one. His progressive actions merely two. He occasionally dropped deep to facilitate link-up play but could not match his colleagues' pace. His immobility is slowing the whole team down, a blend of supreme attackers and midfield conductors. Otherwise he lurked ahead of Congo's high line, then retreated to gather the ball inside, waiting for crosses played behind the line. Try as his colleagues did, none could establish a working relationship with him. He was like a vintage Morris Minor caught amongst Ferraris. Parallels with Lionel Messi will inevitably spring. Messi is slower than Ronaldo, but he creates more — his spatial awareness is superior, his passes defence-piercing, his movement still pulling defenders out of shape even when his legs have nothing left. Messi has runners around him who compensate for what age has taken. Ronaldo has superior technicians around him who cannot compensate for what he no longer provides. That is Portugal's great dilemma. Certainly Ronaldo was not the only Portuguese footballer who endured a horrid day, but he was central to their afflictions. For Portugal to mount a serious title challenge, the Ronaldo riddle has to be solved. Hard decisions have to be made — whether to use him as a substitute, or replace him earlier than Roberto Martinez did on Wednesday. The manager defended him, as he has throughout his tenure. "We don't treat Cristiano for his age, we treat him according to his symptoms and how he feels," he said. The diagnosis, though, reads differently.

Qatar brought a cheering section to the World Cup by treating a large contingent of supporters to an all-expenses-paid trip to North America. Some 1,000 Qatari fans have descended on Vancouver, via jets chartered by the Emir of Qatar, Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani, ahead of Thursday's match against Canada.

The fans are staying at posh hotels, including the Fairmont and the JW Marriott Parq. They've been turning heads downtown, breaking out traditional darbuka drums. "First of all I would like to thank everyone who

EMS News Agency, July 13

Thierry Henry was precise. Analysing Portugal's performance on FOX, the former Arsenal striker and 1998 World Cup winner with France broke down a second-half passage of play involving Francisco Conceição and Bruno Fernandes to explain what Ronaldo is doing wrong. "One thing that's important — the team needs to score, it's not you who needs to score," Henry said. "Look here. Portugal has the ball, Conceição is going to receive the ball. If Ronaldo makes that run in the opposite direction of the ball, he forces the defender to make a decision. But because he wants to score, he goes in Bruno Fernandes' path. If he went to that small area, the defender would have to follow him, and then it would be an easy tap-in for Bruno Fernandes. But because he wants to score, he crosses the path of the back pass — you see the two players and it becomes easier for the defence to intercept. The team needs to score, not you. Did you see Bruno Fernandes' reaction? 'Let the ball roll, make the run, create space so I can just tap it in.' It didn't happen." Kevin-Prince Boateng, speaking on SBS Sport, went further.

When India finished last at the 2012 London Olympics, Manpreet Singh was a teenager still trying to establish himself in international hockey. Fourteen years later, on Wednesday, when he took the field against Germany in Rotterdam for his 413th international appearance, becoming the most-capped player in the history of Indian hockey by overtaking Dilip Tirkey, he was one of the last remaining links to that team.

Between those two moments lies perhaps the most turbulent and transformative period in Indian hockey history. India have gone from humiliation to Olympic medals, from rebuilding to resurgence. Coaches have come and gone, tactical systems have evolved, and entire generations of players have passed through the national setup. Through all of it, Manpreet remained. That is what makes the milestone remarkable. In Indian hockey, a single year can feel like a lifetime. It is a sport governed by brutal physical demands, relentless competition for places and an administrative ecosystem that has rarely been known for patience. Players are often only a poor tournament, an injury or a coaching change away from losing their place. Longevity is rare. Lasting 15 years at the highest level is almost unheard of. It's something Hardik Singh, the veteran forward, keeps alluding to. When Manpreet made his debut, Hardik was still a schoolboy watching him on TV. The two, on Wednesday, shared the same midfield that sliced open Germany in the FIH Pro League. India won 3-1 in a rare dominant performance this season. Manpreet didn't score, but he was there doing what he does best – adding heft to the attack and solidity to the back line.

Manpreet Singh Hockey What has allowed Manpreet to endure where so many others have faded is his willingness to constantly reinvent himself. (Hockey india)What has allowed Manpreet to endure where so many others have faded is his willingness to constantly reinvent himself.The midfielder who burst onto the scene was defined by relentless energy. He seemed capable of covering every blade of grass on the field, pressing opponents, carrying the ball forward and appearing in both circles within moments. Like many athletes of his generation, there was an emphasis on physicality and the visible markers of fitness that dominated sporting conversations a decade ago.But modern hockey does not

went the extra mile and made the journey out here,” captain Abdulaziz Hatem said. “We are very aware of the responsibility. We are going to do what ever it takes for them to leave the stadium happy and for them to be proud of us.” Qatar’s Social and Sport Contribution Fund partnered with the Persian Gulf nation’s soccer federation to pay for the “Qatari Fans Delegation Program” for the World Cup. The fund covers flights, hotels and local transportation and other perks. The federation said the aim was to create “a vibrant stadium atmosphere that will help push the players toward the best possible results on the global stage.” Qatari students in the United States and Canada were also invited to attend the matches. Qatari fans are sure to be heavily outnumbered by red-clad Canadians at BC Place. A major exporter of natural gas and oil, Qatar has a population of some 3.2 million. It hosted the World Cup in 2022 and made its first appearance in the tournament, becoming the first host country to lose all of its group matches. Qatar has fared better this time. Boualem Khoukhi scored on a header in stoppage time to give the Qataris a surprising 1-1 draw against Switzerland in Santa Clara, California. Canada also earned its first World Cup point with a 1-1 draw against Bosnia-Herzegovina last Friday in Toronto. Cyle Larin scored the tying goal in the 78th minute.

"Can I be honest? Ronaldo, if he would be a real team player, he would step down and let the young players flow. Because Portugal is a better side without him. There's so much pressure when he's in the middle, because they all want to play the ball to him. I get that, I understand that. But if Portugal wants to have a chance to go far, I believe Ronaldo should step down. Let the others play and come in for the last 15 to 20 minutes." Really good analysis from Henry. This is the Ronaldo issue right now.

Wayne Rooney, working as a BBC pundit, offered a partial defence. "Cristiano Ronaldo is very often standing in an offside position, but that's not him being lazy, he is actually being very clever. It means that Congo constantly has to search for him. And when they search for him, he automatically creates space for his teammates." After the match, however, Rooney also said DR Congo had "wanted it more" than Portugal.

The numbers told their own story. Ronaldo was held scoreless for the fifth straight World Cup match and the tenth consecutive game in major competitions, including World Cups and European Championships. He has not scored a non-penalty goal in a major competition since June 19, 2021. Despite playing nearly every minute, Portugal have scored just one goal in their past four matches in major competitions. On Wednesday he generated three shot attempts and put none on target — the sixth time he has finished without a shot on target at a World Cup, according to ESPN. Portugal coach Roberto Martinez was unmoved. “The World Cup is a tournament where these things happen. Argentina lost to Saudi Arabia in 2022 and then went on to win the World Cup. In 2010, Spain lost to Switzerland and then won the World Cup.

England have announced five uncapped players in their squad for a historic one-off Test at Lord's against India that is set to be played from July 10. The match will be the first women's Test to be hosted at the iconic venue. Alice Capsey, Tilly Corteen-Coleman, Mady Villiers, Grace Potts and Ellie Threlkeld are the players who are yet to play a Test and have been included in the 15-player squad that will be Nat Sciver-Brunt's first as captain. Apart from the five uncapped players, the England squad also features a number of experienced campaigners like former captain Heather Knight, Tammy Beaumont, Amy Jones and Sciver-Brunt herself. "We have

South Korea coach Hong Myung-bo said that it was unfortunate that a drone was spotting flying over their training base ahead of their second match of the 2026 FIFA World Cup against hosts Mexico in Guadalajara. AP reported that Mexican military forces intercepted and brought down the drone and Hong said that it was good that the object was in the sky before the team had started working on their tactics for the match. South Korea's match against Mexico is set to take place on Thursday (Friday, 6.30am IST) at the Guadalajara Stadium, the fourth of the second round of group games at the ongoing World Cup. "So yesterday, during our training, there was a drone in the sky and we came to know about the fact," Hong said at a news conference Wednesday. "But fortunately, it was right before we practiced our tactics. So it did not impact us significantly. But while we were preparing for the match, that was the most important timing. So what happened was unfortunate." According to AP, military forces used specialised equipment to detect an "unregistered drone" near the South Korean camp, prompting them to "neutralise" it, a Mexican federal agent said. It was not clear if the drone was trying to spy on the South Korean

selected a strong Test squad under the leadership of Nat Sciver-Brunt for what will be another historic few days at Lord's for women's cricket," said ECB's Managing Director of Women's Cricket Clare Connor.

“Test cricket is a rare and wonderfully challenging experience in the women’s game and I know how proud our players are to represent England in this format. For the 11 women who will get the chance to be the first to enjoy that feeling at Lord’s, it will be a moment to savour.” The last time India played a women’s Test in England was in Bristol in June 2021. The match had ended in a draw, with Sneh Rana grinding it out for India and finishing unbeaten on 80 off 154 balls. Rana had also picked four wickets in the England innings while Shafali Verma scored 96 in 152 balls in India’s first innings and 63 in 83 in the second. She won the player of the match award for her efforts. For England, Knight missed out on a century by five runs while Sophie Ecclestone picked four wickets in both Indian innings. England squad for India one-off Test vs India: Nat Sciver-Brunt (c), Tammy Beaumont, Lauren Bell, Maia Bouchie, Alice Capsey, Tilly Corteen-Coleman, Sophie Ecclestone, Lauren Filer, Amy Jones, Heather Knight, Emma Lamb, Grace Potts, Ellie Threlkeld, Mady Villiers, Issy Wong, Warwickshire

team ahead of the game.

The operation to take down the drone was part of Mexico's security operation for the World Cup known as "Plan Kukulkan", involving about 100,000 personnel from federal and local military and police forces. The operation to take down the drone was part of Mexico's security operation for the World Cup known as "Plan Kukulkan", involving about 100,000 personnel from federal and local military and police forces. The operation to take down the drone was part of Mexico's security operation for the World Cup known as "Plan Kukulkan", involving about 100,000 personnel from federal and local military and police forces. Included in the plan are early warning systems, security measures at stadiums, airports, roads and hotels, and protection protocols for teams, officials and fans. South Korea and Mexico started their respective campaigns on the opening day of the 2026 FIFA World Cup on June 11. Mexico beat South Africa 2-0 in the tournament opener after which South Korea beat Czechia 2-1. The tournament is being hosted by Mexico, the United States of America and Canada.

Hyderabad: Hyderabad Toofans named internationally acclaimed coach Paul Revington, "Revs" as Head Coach as the Hockey India League franchise looks to build on its bronze-medal finish in its latest second season.

reward nostalgia. Following the Paris Olympics, Manpreet recognised that remaining the same would mean falling behind. At 33, he undertook yet another transformation. He shed significant weight, altered his training routines and shifted his focus towards agility, endurance and recovery. The objective was not simply to remain fit; it was to remain relevant.

The change has extended beyond his physical conditioning. As age inevitably takes away a fraction of pace and explosiveness, Manpreet has evolved into a different kind of midfielder. The all-action runner has become a deeper, more measured presence. He now controls tempo, occupies intelligent spaces and dictates play with experience as much as athleticism. It is an evolution that has impressed even the younger generation. Hardik Singh, now one of the leaders of the Indian team, belongs to a group that grew up watching Manpreet. Today, he speaks openly about admiring the veteran's ability to keep pace with players nearly a decade younger. Yet the journey to the record was not entirely straightforward. Earlier this year, Manpreet's omission from the national camp briefly raised questions about whether he would get the opportunity to surpass Tirkey's long-standing mark. For a player who has spent much of his career navigating the uncertainties that define Indian hockey, it was another reminder that longevity is never guaranteed. He returned, reclaimed his place and eventually moved clear at the top. Perhaps that is the most fitting way for the record to have arrived.

Madrid: Spanish giant Real Madrid have completed the signing of France defender Ibrahim Konate on a four-year contract, adding another major name to their squad ahead of the new season. The 27-year-old centre-back will officially join the Spanish giants at the end of June after leaving Liverpool as a free agent following the expiry of his contract at Anfield.

Konate becomes Real Madrid's third signing of the summer transfer window after the arrival of Spain left back Marc Cucurella from Chelsea and Portuguese midfielder Bernardo Silva. The trio are expected to play key roles as Madrid prepare for a new campaign under head coach Jose Mourinho. "Real Madrid C. F. and Ibrahima Konate have reached an agreement for him to become a Real Madrid player for the next four seasons, until June 30, 2030," the club said in an official statement.

The French defender arrives in Madrid after spending five successful seasons with Liverpool. Signed from German club RB Leipzig in 2021, Konate established himself as one of the Premier League's most reliable centre-backs and played a significant role in the club's recent success.

Batwara 1947 teaser: Sunny Deol chooses courage amid chaos and bloodshed.



After Ikkis and Main Vapas Aaunga, filmmaker Rajkumar Santoshi is set to bring his take on one of the most defining chapters in Indian history—the Partition of India—with Batwara 1947. On Thursday, the makers unveiled the film’s teaser, offering a glimpse of characters played by Sunny Deol, Preity Zinta, Shabana Azmi, Ali Fazal, Karan Deol and Abhimanyu Singh, among others. The over one-minute-long teaser opens with a powerful voiceover: “Hindustan, after a great struggle and countless sacrifices, finally won her freedom from centuries of slavery. But tragically, the country was divided into two.” The visuals that follow paint a grim picture of the Partition era. A steam-engine train races through the landscape as panic-stricken crowds run for safety. Homes burn in the background, capturing the chaos and devastation that accompanied India’s independence in

1947. The narration continues: “In the name of religion, humanity was being butchered.”

Soon, viewers are introduced to Abhimanyu Singh’s menacing character, who appears consumed by violence and vengeance. “The streets will be flooded with blood!” he declares. The teaser then shifts focus to the film’s key characters, played by Shabana Azmi, Sunny Deol, Preity Zinta, Karan Deol and Ali Fazal. One of the teaser’s standout moments comes during a tense face-off between Sunny Deol and Abhimanyu Singh. Challenging him to a fight, Abhimanyu asks, “Panga lena hai (Want a fight)?” To this, Sunny responds in his trademark style, “I don’t intend to, but I wouldn’t mind it either.” The teaser concludes with the line: “In times of hatred and fear, he chose courage.”

The team behind Batwara 1947 Written and directed by Rajkumar Santoshi and produced by Aamir Khan Productions, Batwara 1947 is scheduled to hit theatres on August 14, on the eve of India’s Independence Day. The film boasts an impressive technical team. Oscar-winning composer A.R. Rahman has composed the music, while celebrated lyricist Javed Akhtar has penned the songs. Academy Award winner Resul Pookutty serves as the sound designer, and National Film Award-winning cinematographer Santosh Sivan is behind the camera. Interestingly, the project was originally titled Lahore 1947. However, the makers later renamed it Batwara 1947, reportedly to avoid potential political controversies and geopolitical sensitivities amid strained India-Pakistan relations. The new title was officially unveiled through a motion poster released on June 9.

Vikram Bhatt defends Alia Bhatt amid Alpha backlash: ‘1000 negative comments for Rs 1 lakh’

Vikram Bhatt alia bhatt Filmmaker Vikram Bhatt has come out in support of Alia Bhatt following the mixed reactions to the Alpha teaser. Filmmaker Vikram Bhatt has spoken in defence of Alia Bhatt amid the online discourse surrounding the teaser of Alpha, the first female-led film in the YRF Spy Universe. Reacting to the criticism and trolling directed at the actor, Vikram questioned why Alia was being singled out despite her willingness to step outside her comfort zone.

“Why is Alia Bhatt getting trolled? Poor thing. She’s attempting something different and should be appreciated for it,” he said in an interview with News18. Drawing from his own experience, Vikram Bhatt claimed that the trailer of his recent film Haunted 3D: Echoes Of The Past was also targeted by what he described as a paid trolling campaign. Recalling the incident, the filmmaker said, “We were getting a lot of bad comments on the YouTube channel of Anand Pandit Motion Pictures but not on Saregama’s YouTube channel or Instagram. Then we found out that it was a paid campaign and the people saying bad things were bots. So, we had to work that out. We can make out organic comments from inorganic ones.” Expanding on the issue of online negativity, Vikram Bhatt urged audiences to be cautious about taking every social media comment at face value. “We need to tell audiences that every bad comment they read could be generated by a bot, by a computer, by a nobody. It takes



Rs 1 lakh for thousand comments. I don’t know who’s paying this money. But I’m sure everyone has enemies. You don’t know which faction is doing it. But obviously, someone doesn’t wish you well,” he said. Directed by Shiv Rawail and backed by Yash Raj Films, Alpha is one of the most anticipated entries in the spy universe and marks Alia Bhatt’s first full-fledged action-led franchise film.

Christopher Nolan brings The Odyssey to Mumbai on July



Elaborating on Christopher Nolan’s upcoming visit, Sanjeev Kumar Bijli, executive director, PVR INOX Limited, says: “Christopher Nolan is one of the rare filmmakers whose work consistently generates extraordinary anticipation among Indian audiences. Over the years, he has built a deeply engaged fanbase that views each of his films as a theatrical event, driven by his distinctive storytelling and commitment to creating experiences designed for the big screen.

Modern master Christopher Nolan is visiting Mumbai to attend the premiere of The Odyssey — his first-ever premiere event in India — and related promotional activities to be held on July 10 and 11. For the Indian premiere, the Academy Award-winning filmmaker will be accompanied by the film’s stars Matt Damon, Tom Holland, and Oscar-winning producer Emma Thomas. The premiere shows of the fantasy action film, to be held on both July 10 and 11, will take place at Mumbai’s PVR ICON: Phoenix Palladium. Mumbai has been designated an official stop on The Odyssey’s global premiere tour, by the filmmakers and Universal Pictures International, alongside London, Paris and New York. The highly-anticipated film, written and directed by Nolan, arrives in theaters worldwide July 17.

The Academy Award-winning filmmaker’s India visit as part of The Odyssey’s global premiere tour might come as a pleasant surprise but his strong fanbase in the country does not. Elaborating on Christopher Nolan’s upcoming visit, Sanjeev Kumar Bijli, executive director, PVR INOX Limited, says: “Christopher Nolan is one of the rare filmmakers whose work consistently generates extraor-

dinary anticipation among Indian audiences. Over the years, he has built a deeply engaged fanbase that views each of his films as a theatrical event, driven by his distinctive storytelling and commitment to creating experiences designed for the big screen.” The sale of advance tickets for The Odyssey in IMAX format opened in cinemas across India on June 8. According to PVR INOX sources, over 45 per cent of available tickets have already been sold, “reflecting strong audience demand and anticipation for the film.”

The Odyssey is the first feature film shot entirely with IMAX cameras. The film is produced by Christopher Nolan and his wife Emma Thomas for their company, Syncopy. Commenting on The Odyssey generating an incredible buzz among Indian cinephiles ahead of its release, Bijli shares, “The response to The Odyssey has been exceptionally encouraging, particularly across IMAX and premium formats, reflecting both the excitement surrounding Nolan’s latest film and the growing demand for immersive cinema experiences in India. Nolan’s visit further highlights the significance of the Indian market for global releases and underscores the passion that audiences here have for world-class theatrical storytelling.” The film is a cinematic adaptation of Homer’s ancient Greek epic ‘The Odyssey’ by Christopher Nolan whose spectacular filmography includes The Prestige (2006), Inception (2010), Interstellar (2014), Dunkirk (2017), Tenet (2020) and Oppenheimer (2023). The Odyssey features Damon as Odysseus, the Greek king of Ithaca, and chronicles his decade-long perilous journey home after the Trojan War as he attempts to reunite with his wife, Penelope, played by Anne Hathaway. The cast includes Tom Holland, Robert Pattinson, Lupita Nyong’o, Zendaya, and Charlize Theron. Nolan’s Indian fandom has grown steadily over the last two decades, with the filmmaker continuing to wow audiences with grand scale, cinematic spectacle and bold vision. When Oppenheimer, Nolan’s last feature, released nearly three years ago, India emerged as its second-largest international market during the opening weekend. The film grossed Rs 157.50 crore (source: sacnilk.com) and became one of the highest-grossing Hollywood films in India. Re-release of his movies, such as Interstellar, too attracted a large number of movie-goers. Alaka Sahani is a prominent film critic and journalist based in Mumbai. With a career spanning over two decades, she has established herself as one of India’s most authoritative voices in cinematic journalism, known for an analytical approach and insights that transcend the standard cycle of celebrity journalism. Expertise & Accolades In 2014, Alaka was honoured with the National Film Award for Best Film Critic.

Shah Rukh Khan waived off Rs 42 lakh bill to help Deool Band 2; film is now a Rs 80 cr hit



Pravin Tarde’s Deool Band 2 has emerged as a box-office phenomenon, becoming one of the five highest-grossing Marathi films of all time. Made on a reported budget of just Rs 8-10 crore, the film has already crossed Rs 80 crore at the box office. But what if we told you that Bollywood superstar Shah Rukh Khan played a crucial role in helping the film reach theatres in the first place? The film, which has been receiving widespread praise for its strong theatrical run, almost faced a major hurdle before its release. According to director Pravin Tarde, Shah Rukh Khan stepped in at a critical moment and helped the makers by waiving off a bill of Rs 42-45 lakh.

Speaking to Abhijat Marathi Filmy, Tarde recalled approaching Shah Rukh Khan’s production house, Red Chillies Entertainment, for a Digital Cinema Package (DCP)—the digital format required to screen films in theatres. While the makers had budgeted around Rs 12 lakh for the process, they were handed an estimate of nearly

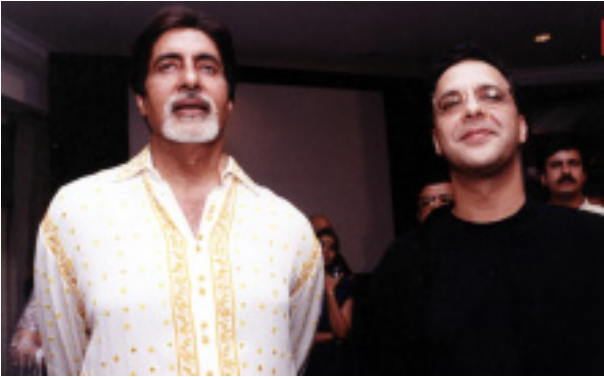
Amitabh Bachchan did Eklavya for free; director refused to pay for hotel, plane too

Amitabh Bachchan is known for his discipline on set, and many of his collaborators have often praised how Amitabh never put on any additional pressure on the film’s budget with his entourage’s cost. Previously, filmmaker Vidhu Vinod Chopra elaborated on the same and said during the shoot for Eklavya, Amitabh paid for his hotel, and did not charge a single rupee as upfront payment. When the actor wanted a private plane to travel from Rajasthan to Mumbai, Chopra refused as it was too expensive. Amitabh ended up paying for the flight by himself and even offered a lift to Chopra in his plane. Amitabh Bachchan arranged for his own private plane, paid for his accommodation

In the book, Unscripted: Conversations on Life and Cinema, written by Chopra and Abhijat Joshi, he recalled the anecdote, “When the shoot was over, he wanted a private plane to take him back to Bombay. I had to refuse because the budget couldn’t be stretched. He chartered a plane from Jodhpur and paid for it himself, and Anu (Anupama Chopra, wife) and I hitched a plane ride with him. I hadn’t paid Amitabh for the film, yet he gave me one of my first private plane rides.” He also recalled how the hotel room requested by Bachchan’s team was costing Rs 65,000 more than the assigned budget for his stay, so Bachchan paid for his own accommodation. Chopra recalled that this was the reason why he gifted Bachchan a Rolls-Royce worth Rs 4.5 crore after the film, to thank the star for his generosity.

The shoot for Eklavya faced a few ups and downs in the early days and at one point, Chopra even fired Bachchan from the film, and decided to replace him with Sanjay Dutt, who was playing another role in the film. He shared that he had to complete the shoot in just 37 days, and because they wanted to wrap the shoot quickly, they decided to use two cameras, which wasn’t the norm back then. When Bachchan arrived for the schedule in Rajasthan, which was supposed to last for over a month, he only came with a few bags. Chopra asked him the reason behind the same and was told that Jaya was sure that the two would argue, and Bachchan would be back home sooner than expected. “Jaya has sent all my things. She is sure I will be back in a week and believes we can’t work together, and there’s no way I will stay longer than a week,” he recalled Bachchan saying. And Jaya’s prophecy almost came true just as Bachchan started shooting. On the first day of their shoot, Amitabh was late, and Vinod missed the morning light which was necessary for the shot. “You can’t come bloody late on the set, yaar! I missed my magic hour light. I can’t take the shot now. We have to reschedule—the light has gone. So I don’t like you at this moment, Amit,” he told Bachchan.

The next day, Amitabh was late again and once again, Vinod couldn’t get the desired shot. The third day



was even more important now, and once again, Bachchan wasn’t on set. “I completely lost it. I could see my light disappearing. I knew I had lost the shot. I came down from the crane and saw Sanjay Dutt standing there. I told him: ‘Put on Eklavya’s costume, you’re not playing Pannalal Chohar but Eklavya’. End of story. I’m done with Bachchan,” he recalled. Vinod was shouting outside Bachchan’s room and asked his line producer how much money had been spent on the film until then. When he was told it was Rs 1 crore, he simply said, “Write it off.” Just at that moment, Bachchan came out of his room. There was a long silence as Bachchan walked towards Chopra wife, Anupama, and asked her, “How do you live with this madman? He is crazy.” She started laughing, he laughed too, and eventually, everyone around had a good laugh about the whole incident. This is when Bachchan explained the reason behind his delay and said that costume and make-up were taking longer time than expected. He recalled Bachchan saying, “Do you know how difficult it is to put this beard on? The guys who stick it on my face really stink and they are all over me, and it takes hours. If I showed up on set and the beard was not right, you would scream.” he next day, Chopra told the make-up guys to take a bath with Dettol, and at 4 am, he heard Bachchan screaming. He was later told by the actor that his make-up room smelled like a hospital room. That day, Bachchan reached the set one hour earlier and when Vinod asked him the reason behind it, he said. “I don’t like to be shouted at, sir. I was playing it safe.” Bachchan’s couldn’t express what’s in his heart Eklavya was written with Bachchan in mind, and Vinod said that the main character was “inspired by him.” He recalled that once, when he was travelling with the star in his car, his words had a profound effect on the filmmaker. “I don’t remember exactly what he said, but it was on the lines of: ‘You’re a blessed man, Vinod. Whatever you have in your heart, you can spill it out, just like that.’ He tapped his chest and continued: Everything stays inside here! All bottled up. It doesn’t come out.

Preeti Simoes on her equation with Kapil Sharma: ‘We have grown in different directions’

TV producer Preeti Simoes, who served as the creative director on Comedy Nights with Kapil and The Kapil Sharma Show, is currently busy with ZEE5’s reality show Maa Hain Na. Although Preeti and Kapil Sharma parted ways on a bitter note following a fallout, the two now share a cordial relationship. In a recent interview with SCREEN, she looked back on her tiff with Kapil. In 2018, Kapil Sharma and Preeti Simoes had a bitter fallout, with the comedian filing complaints against the TV producer for extortion and defamation. Revisiting that controversy, Preeti said, “It’s an old story. It happened during The Kapil Sharma Show; they were with Sony TV that time. They are together now and doing so well together. We are in touch, but not regularly. However, Sunil is family to us. With Kapil, it’s so nice that when we meet, we meet beautifully. Both have grown in different directions. The best

part is he is very supportive about it. I don’t watch the show anymore; I have an emotional attachment to it. But I see clips when Sunil sends them. That was a phase; it was bound to happen. I am glad they are together now.” Preeti added that the media attention made things ugly. “It happened with me too. When I was in a high-profile relationship, I was totally put to the cleaners. Nobody asked me. A very small number of journalists asked me. It could have been that two people can part ways due to creative differences also; it doesn’t always have to be something else. It went on for a very long time.” What Kapil Sharma and Preeti Simoes said after the fallout According to a report in Zee News back then, Kapil Sharma said in his complaint, “Right from the shooting schedules to guest coordination—everything was managed by Preeti. And for that, I paid her ?2 lakh a month. Soon, I hired her sister Neeti as well, and as the show became popular and the channel benefited from it, I raised their salaries.”